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ABSTRACT

This Manual for New Jersey Community College Trustees offers a brief history and overview of the New Jersey Community College System and New Jersey's System of Higher Education for new board members. It also provides a list of trustee duties and responsibilities, which include: defining the role and mission of the college, evaluating institutional performance, approving college plans, establishing tuition rates, hiring the president, evaluating the president, establishing institutional budgets and approving contracts and expenditures, setting the tone for institutional leadership, and representing the community to the college and the college to the community. There are 11 members of the board, plus a non-voting student representative elected from the graduating class. The manual details the legal requirements delineated by New Jersey's Open Public Meetings Act of 1975, which requires that the public and the press receive advance notice of, and be given the right to attend, all meetings of public bodies. The manual also addresses the issues of financial disclosure for officers of county colleges, the collective bargaining laws, and governmental relations with the Board. Included is a list of associations to which many of the community colleges belong, and with which trustees may want to interact. These associations include: The New Jersey Council of County Colleges, the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). (NB)

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Welcome to the Board

A Manual for New Jersey Community College Trustees

2000-2001

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NEW JERSEY COUNCIL OF County Colleges

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"The remarkable expansion in community colleges...is something which has really had a major positive effect on our workforce."

~ Alan Greenspan
Chairman of the Federal Reserve

"Community colleges have an important role to play in making certain we have the skilled workers ready to help businesses take advantage of all the opportunities in the Digital Age."

~ Bill Gates
CEO, Microsoft

"Support your community colleges! They are the unsung, under-funded backbone of America's all-important lifelong learning network."

~ Tom Peters
Author and Management Guru

"Community colleges – open door, melting pot institutions that they are – truly symbolize higher education at its all-inclusive best."

~ Jamilah Evelyn
Editor, Black Issues in Higher Education

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Welcome

This booklet discusses your responsibilities as a member of a New Jersey community college board of trustees. We hope you find it informative.

As a newly appointed trustee, you are embarking on an exciting undertaking that will make you a part of the life of your community college, and your community college very much a part of your life. Governance of your community college will involve you in an institution that improves the lives of the people of your community. It is an important responsibility. You are to be commended for your willingness to donate your time for the good of your fellow citizens.

"A public office is a public trust" is a maxim that underscores the title of the office you now hold. You are an official who holds the resources, property, and future of a local community college in trust for the citizens of your community.

In a strict financial sense, you will not be compensated for your job as a trustee. But in a larger sense, you will get enormous dividends from your service to the college. As a trustee of a learning institution, you will learn and grow in many ways, along with the students.

The new trustee faces a challenging period of orientation to the board, the college, and the art of trusteeship. The New Jersey Council of County Colleges speaks for the colleges at the state level and exists, in part, to help you be the very best trustee you can be. We look forward to a long and mutually beneficial relationship between you and New Jersey's community colleges.

Dr. Lawrence A. Nespoli
President
New Jersey Council of County Colleges

Some History

The community college sector is still viewed by many as "the new kid on the block." Compared to private colleges and universities, our history is quite recent. Many junior colleges in the United States were created in the years immediately after World War II.

In 1962, the New Jersey Legislature created the framework for a statewide system of public community colleges. Both the state and the counties in which they are located provide financial support.

The first four community colleges began operations in fall 1966, and 10 more opened their doors before the end of the decade. Three were established during the 1970s, and the last two in 1982.

Today, the state's 21 counties operate 19 community colleges. In two cases, two counties jointly sponsor one college (Atlantic and Cape May sponsor Atlantic Cape Community College; Hunterdon and Somerset sponsor Raritan Valley Community College).

An Overview of New Jersey's Community Colleges

THE COMPREHENSIVE MISSION:
While some states have either vocational institutes or transfer-oriented community colleges, New Jersey has embraced the principle of comprehensive community colleges. This is a statewide mandate for all community colleges to respond fully to the educational, cultural, and community needs of their respective counties.

New Jersey's comprehensive community colleges prepare students to enter four-year institutions, train them to assume skilled positions in New Jersey's workforce, and offer other opportunities that enrich the quality of life for county residents.

The colleges offer a wide array of associate degree programs including both transfer and occupational curricula, and certificate programs in various occupational fields, as well as noncredit courses that serve students' careers or general interests.

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Community service and cultural programs are also part of the comprehensive community college mission.

ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY: New Jersey's community colleges are open-access institutions, permitting anyone with a high school diploma or its equivalent or anyone over the age of 18 to enroll. As such, community colleges have played the key role in expanding higher education opportunities to new, nontraditional populations of students, which typically include larger proportions of minorities, women, older adults, and part-time students than is the case at four-year colleges and universities.

When the Legislature created New Jersey's community college system, it was intended that tuition be kept very low to provide educational opportunity to economically disadvantaged populations.

Many of New Jersey's community colleges have frozen tuition for several years in a row. Others have had very modest increases. This recent tuition restraint has been possible because of unprecedented state funding increases and continuing county support over the past several years.

ENROLLMENTS: Statewide, over 122,000 credit-students are enrolled at community colleges. This means that community colleges serve almost half of the undergraduate students enrolled statewide.

When the number of students attending noncredit courses, seminars, and workshops is added to the number of students in credit courses, total community college enrollments are more than a quarter of a million New Jerseyans every year.

STUDENT PROFILES: New Jersey community college student bodies include more "nontraditional" students than is true in the other higher education sectors. For example, the average community college student is about 30 years old.

More than half of all community college students attend college part-time – the highest part-time attendance rate by far of all New Jersey colleges.

With nearly 90 percent of community college students attending their home-county colleges, these institutions serve primarily local populations. Students who enroll at community colleges outside their county generally do so when they want to pursue programs not offered at their home campus.

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INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS: Each community college offers a diverse range of programs, but cannot offer every course or program that might be of interest to county residents. New Jersey community colleges offer more than 450 programs leading to the Associate in Arts (A.A.), Associate in Science (A.S.), or Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree, as well as more than 300 certificates.

In instances where a particular program is unavailable in the home county, state law permits a system of "charge back" whereby the home county provides funding so that the student may enroll in that program at a neighboring college at the in-county tuition rate.

About two-thirds of the degrees and certificates awarded by community colleges are in occupational/technical fields. Most of these programs prepare graduates for immediate employment, while some also provide college credits for transfer to a senior institution and further study. Liberal arts transfer degrees account for a little more than one-third of the graduates. Business and health professions account for about one-quarter and one-fifth, respectively, of all graduates.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Many of the programs and services offered by community colleges are geared towards local and statewide economic development activities. Customized training and continuing education are examples of the community college commitment in this area.

With business and industry outreach centers at all of the 19 community colleges, these colleges also play a major role in small business development. The centers assist local businesses through counseling, seminars on topics of interest to business owners, and referral services to banks and government agencies. Many New Jersey entrepreneurs are served by the seven Small Business Development Centers and three business incubators operated by community colleges.

New Jersey's community colleges are also involved in a number of statewide partnerships and projects geared towards economic development. The colleges collaborate in statewide economic development initiatives by working with the New Jersey Department of Labor, the New Jersey Commerce and Economic Growth Commission, the New Jersey Science and Technology Commission, as well as with private sector associations and corporations.

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Community colleges are also by far the most active providers of training and retraining for disadvantaged and displaced workers in the state, enrolling more than 27,000 individuals annually. The community college sector is the hub for a variety of state and federally sponsored programs that help both individuals and businesses to meet their needs for occupational training and workplace literacy skills.

An Overview of New Jersey's System of Higher Education

New Jersey's 19 community colleges form a sector within a 56-institution system that includes 12 other public and 25 private institutions. The other public colleges and universities include three research universities (Rutgers University, New Jersey Institute of Technology, and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey), nine state colleges/teaching universities, and 25 private institutions (14 senior colleges and universities receiving state aid, eight religious institutions, and three degree-granting proprietary institutions).

THE NEW JERSEY HIGHER EDUCATION RESTRUCTURING ACT OF 1994: This state law abolished the State Board and Department of Higher Education. For almost 30 years the State Board and Department had broad regulatory and coordinating authority over New Jersey's colleges and universities. Dissolving these state entities reduced the extent of state involvement in institutional matters, removed a level of bureaucratic review, and introduced a new entrepreneurial spirit to New Jersey's colleges and universities Most importantly, the restructured system gave increased autonomy, responsibility, and accountability to trustees.

The 1994 restructuring act also created the Commission on Higher Education as the new state-level coordinating agency for New Jersey's system of higher education, and the Presidents' Council as a new systemwide advisory body. It also gave many new responsibilities to boards of trustees and to the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, the state association for New Jersey's 19 community colleges.

COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION: The Governor appoints the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education's 12 public members: six appointed with the advice and consent of the Senate, one recommended by the Senate President, one recommended by the Assembly Speaker, the chair of the Presidents' Council, two student members, and one faculty representative.

The Commission's primary responsibilities include: systemwide planning, research, and advocacy; final decisions on institutional licensure and mission changes; policy recommendations for higher education initiatives and an annual systemwide budget policy statement; and, upon referral from the New Jersey Presidents' Council, decisions on new academic programs that exceed an institution's mission or are unduly costly or duplicative.

In exercising its institutional licensure responsibility, the Commission ordinarily accepts the judgment of the Middle States Association (MSA) with respect to New Jersey college and university accreditation. Commission staff members accompany Middle States teams on site visits only in certain circumstances.

PRESIDENTS' COUNCIL: The New Jersey Presidents' Council consists of the presidents of the state's public and independent institutions of higher education that receive state aid. The presidents of the two proprietary schools that enroll the largest numbers of students in state licensed degree programs also serve as members of the Council, ex officio, to represent the interests of all such schools in New Jersey. The presidents of the two institutions that prepare students for careers in the field of religion that enroll the largest number of students in state licensed degree programs also serve as members of the Council, ex officio, to represent the interests of all such schools. The Council may invite presidents of the state's degree-granting religious and proprietary institutions to participate as non-voting affiliated members. In all, the Presidents' Council consists of 49 voting members.

The Presidents' Council's responsibilities include: reviewing and commenting on new academic programs; providing research and public information on higher education; advising the Commission on planning, institutional licensure, and mission as well as costly or duplicative new academic programs; making recommendations on statewide higher education issues, state aid, and student assistance; and encouraging regional and cooperative programs and transfer articulation agreements.

The Presidents' Council's activities are largely guided by a 14-member Executive Board consisting of five community college presidents, three research university presidents, three state college/teaching university presidents, and three nonpublic institution presidents.

BOARDS OF TRUSTEES: Trustee boards provide broad leadership and shape policy for their institutions. The boards have much more responsibility under the 1994 restructuring act than they previously did under the State Board and Department of Higher Education. Trustee responsibilities now include setting student tuition and fees, establishing admissions standards and degree requirements, investing institutional funds, and legal affairs. Boards of Trustees also have full authority for approving academic programs, making all personnel decisions, and capital (physical plant) initiatives.

Under restructuring, institutional trustee boards have sole and final authority in several matters that formerly were subject to various state review or approval processes. Contracting for services, materials, and supplies is one example of how the restructuring act eliminated unnecessary state oversight of community colleges. A 1982 statute, the County College Contracts Law, governs procurement procedures for community colleges. Until 1994, this law included provisions also subjecting the colleges to regulations by the former Board of Higher Education. The restructuring act repealed these unnecessary additional requirements.

THE NEW JERSEY COUNCIL OF COUNTY COLLEGES: A 1967 law established the New Jersey Council of County Colleges to advise state-level policy makers on matters affecting community colleges. A 1990 law made the Council a trustee-headed nonprofit corporation whose primary purpose was to serve as the state-level advocacy organization for New Jersey's 19 community colleges.

Under the 1994 restructuring act, the Council was given new coordinating responsibilities including submitting a statewide budget request for community colleges, recommending the formula for distributing state aid among the colleges, and recommending state capital appropriations among the 19 community colleges.

All community college trustee board chairs (or their designees) and all community college presidents are members of the Council. A seven-person Executive Committee consisting of four trustees and three presidents, with a trustee serving as the Council Chair, largely guides the Council's activities.

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Financial Support

STATE FUNDING: The State Treasurer, in consultation with the Council of County Colleges, allocates state aid to each community college based on a formula that provides foundation funding for each institution plus funding based on enrollments.

The state also provides funding for employee fringe benefits and debt service for capital projects. On the former, the state pays pension costs related to community college employees who are eligible for the TIAA-CREF plan. On capital projects, known as the "Chapter 12" program, the Council of County Colleges recommends capital projects for approval by the Department of Treasury. Upon approval by Treasury, the state funds 50 percent of the annual debt service on county bonds issued for approved capital construction projects at community colleges. The counties may opt to have the bonds issued by the New Jersey Education Facilities Authority, with the county and state paying 50 percent of the authority bonds.

The restructuring act charged the Commission on Higher Education with developing recommendations on the funding of higher education in New Jersey. The Commission's master plan recommends that the state, the counties, and students each provide one-third of the funding to community colleges.

In 1997, The Committee to Reinvest in New Jersey's Community Colleges was established by two former state senators who co-sponsored the original legislation creating New Jersey's community colleges. The Committee – comprised of business, government, and education leaders from throughout the state – was created to urge the Governor and Legislature to implement the Commission on Higher Education's recommendation for increased state funding to community colleges.

As recently as the 1990's, the state's share was far below the recommended one-third level while the students' share was far above it. The Commission recommended that the one-third share for each partner be accomplished over a seven-year period.

Since then, the state has provided successive $12 million annual increases in its funding to community colleges. These unprecedented state funding increases and the tuition restraint by community colleges have resulted in the following estimated funding shares in 2000-2001:

State:	30 percent
County:	30 percent
Tuition:	40 percent

Several more years of continued state funding increases along with tuition restraint and county maintenance of effort will result in equal one-third funding shares by the state, counties, and students in 2004-2005.

COUNTY FUNDING: Each New Jersey county has a board of school estimate (typically three freeholders and two trustees) that determines the overall budget for its community college. The freeholder board then collects and appropriates the necessary amount in the same manner as for other county purposes.

TUITION: Each board of trustees has final authority for setting tuition and fees each year. The board is required by law to hold a public hearing before approving tuition increases. Tuition at New Jersey's community colleges ranged from a low of $56 per credit to a high of $75 per credit in Fall 2000.

Trustee Duties and Responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities of a community college board of trustees are spelled out in state law. One of the first things a new board member should do is become familiar with the portion of state law that deals with community colleges. This is commonly called the New Jersey Statutes Annotated. Community college trustee responsibilities are specified in the county college portion of the statute (18A:64A-12) as well as in the 1994 higher education restructuring legislation (18A:3B-6).

While no one list can include all of the responsibilities you will have as a board member, some of the major ones are:

- Defining the role and mission of the college
- Evaluating institutional performance
- Approving college plans
- Establishing tuition rates
- Hiring the president
- Evaluating the president
- Establishing institutional budgets and approving contracts and expenditures
- Setting the tone for institutional leadership
- Representing the community to the college and the college to the community

One of Eleven

As a community college trustee, you are one member of an eleven-member board.* Under state law, a county's board of chosen freeholders appoints eight members of a community college's board of trustees, the Governor appoints two, and the county superintendent of schools serves ex officio. The student body elects from the graduating class a nonvoting representative to the board.

* *Note: Atlantic Cape Community College and Raritan Valley Community College, because they each serve two counties, have 15 trustees. Union County College, in addition to having 11 trustees, has a 28 member Board of Governors.*

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All trustees of public institutions of higher education serve on a voluntary basis. All voting board members have equal rights and responsibilities.

All decisions made by boards of trustees must be made by a vote in a public meeting. Away from the boardroom, each board member speaks only as an individual and cannot make comments for the board as a whole.

Remember that board members cannot act as individuals, but only as a board. This means that even though you may sometimes disagree with what becomes board policy, once it is adopted by the board you will bear some responsibility for implementation of that policy. As decisions are made, you are expected to speak openly for your point of view. But once the decision is final, you should support the position of the board.

Effective trusteeship requires the ability to function as part of a team. A team functions best when members support each other publicly, even though there might have been different points of view as a decision was being reached.

Officers of the Board

Under New Jersey statute, (18A:64A-10), boards elect their officers at an organizational meeting each Fall. The statute says the board shall elect one of its members as chairperson and another member as vice-chairperson. The board may also elect other officers as it deems necessary.

ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON: As the chosen leader of the board of trustees, the chairperson fills a unique role. Duties of the chairperson include presiding at meetings and taking responsibility for their orderly conduct. The chairperson should know parliamentary procedure and use it to assist the board in moving quickly and efficiently through the meeting's agenda.

The chairperson must see that all board members who wish to speak are given the opportunity to do so. The chairperson guides the discussion and must see that college staff supplies any needed information. The chairperson consults often with the president as the agenda is put together.

Different boards have different attitudes on the length of time the chairperson should serve. Some boards believe the board should continue with an experienced chairperson; other boards believe in regularly electing a different chairperson so that the experience of being chairperson helps develop board members.

The President

Perhaps the most important responsibility of the board is to employ its chief executive officer, the president. It is the president who is responsible for the administration of the college. The president acts as academic leader, representative of the college in the community, top manager, and chief advisor to the board. As the most visible employee, the president represents the college to all of its many constituents.

The relationship between the board and the president should be open and mutually supportive. Without a shared sense of purpose between the board and the president, and without mutual respect and trust, a college will experience difficult times.

The president should be the major source of information and recommendations channeled to the board. As chief executive officer, the president must be responsible for all administrative recommendations that are brought to the board. While it is necessary to delegate authority in most matters, the president alone is responsible for the recommendations coming to the board from staff.

For this reason, board members should be sensitive to the president's need to be the link between trustees and administrative staff. By coordinating information and requests, the president can clarify questions and monitor the accuracy of reports. When trustees have a question or suggestion, it is wise to call the president first.

Presidents strive to be sensitive to the goals and concerns of the board and to act in accordance with its wishes. In most instances, recommendations made by the president will be acceptable to the board of trustees. Once the board makes policy decisions and the administration has been directed to carry out those policies, the president and other employees have the right to expect support from the board of trustees.

The presidency of an institution of higher education is a very difficult job. Demands are made on the president's time around the clock, and presidential decisions are constantly tested and challenged. Presidents need the strong support of their boards if they are to lead their institutions effectively.

The Difference Between Policy-making and Administration

Boards of trustees are responsible for making policy, and staffs are responsible for administering the college. The basis of this belief is in the nature of the two jobs. Board members are part-time volunteers. The system works best when part-time volunteers set general policies as representatives of the community, but leave it to the president and staff members to establish procedures and make decisions that carry out those policies on a day-to-day basis.

Sometimes, however, it is difficult to clearly draw the line between policy-making and administrative matters. Deciding the appropriate roles of the trustees and the president must ultimately rest with the people who are involved at the local level. Past practice, local tradition, and the personalities of board members and administrators all play a role in this determination.

Generally, however, it can be said that the board should take the larger perspective. It functions most effectively when day-to-day details are left to the president and the staff.

The Attorney and the Auditor

Two people of particular importance to the board are its attorney and its auditor. While both work at the direction of the president, both have a very special obligation to protect the interest of the board.

You should expect to receive legal opinions and auditor's reports on a regular basis. Boards that ignore the management letters from their auditors or that act contrary to the legal advice from their attorneys often do so at serious consequences and potential liabilities.

The Students and the Faculty

Underlying all of your decisions as a trustee should be a concern for the welfare of the students who come to your community college for education and training. These students are of all ages and backgrounds, with a variety of life situations and personal or career goals.

Students are at your college because they want new opportunities in their lives. They want to improve themselves, and they believe that the community college is the best way to achieve their goals.

Faculty work with you to help the students reach their potential. As the core of your academic work force, faculty serve both as role models and as providers of knowledge.

Of all the employees at the college, it is the faculty who are most directly responsible for fulfilling the college's primary mission. Periodically, the board should review all policies regarding the hiring and evaluation of teachers. In addition, the board should support efforts to reward excellence in teaching.

The Open Meetings Act

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted in 1975. This law requires that the public and press receive advance notice of, and be given the right to attend, all meetings of public bodies. Failure to comply with this law may result in voiding of actions taken by a public body, personal liability on the part of participating public officials, or court rulings mandating compliance with the law. County college boards of trustees are subject to the Open Public Meetings Act.

While the public has the right to be present at a meeting, the board of trustees retains the right to determine whether the public may speak and if so what reasonable limitations it will impose on public participation.

Within seven days following its annual organization meeting, the board of trustees must prominently post, mail to at least two designated newspapers, and file with the county clerk an Annual Notice of the schedule (and any revisions) of the time and place of its regular meetings. For any meetings not included in the Annual Notice, the board of trustees must provide 48-hour notice of the time, date, location, and agenda of the noticed meeting.

At the beginning of each board of trustees meeting, the presiding officer must announce publicly, and have entered into the minutes, a statement of the manner in which adequate notice of the meeting was provided.

The Open Public Meetings Act sets forth circumstances where the public interest or personal privacy interests of individuals require that matters be discussed in sessions closed to the public. Except where otherwise permitted or directed by statute, the final vote must be taken in public session. Closed session discussion is permitted where the subject matter:

- by law or court rule requires confidentiality;
- cannot be made public without impairing a right to receive federal funds;
- would constitute an unwarranted invasion of individual privacy;
- concerns collective bargaining;
- concerns the purchase, lease, or acquisition of real property with public funds, the setting of banking rates or investment of public funds, and release of the information could adversely affect the public interest;
- concerns tactics and techniques utilized to protect the safety and property of the public;
- concerns pending or anticipated litigation or contract negotiations, as well as matters falling under the attorney-client privilege; and
- concerns the employment, appointment, termination, or disciplining of a prospective or current public officer or employee unless the affected individual requests in writing that the matter be discussed in public.

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Before the public can be excluded from a meeting, the board of trustees must adopt a resolution at a public portion of a meeting, stating the time and place that the closed session will be convened, the general nature of the subject to be discussed, and the time or circumstances under which the matter can be disclosed to the public.

The Open Public Meetings Act also requires that reasonably comprehensible minutes be kept of all meetings of the board of trustees including closed sessions. The minimum contents of minutes should include:

- the time and place of the meeting;
- the names of the persons present;
- the statement of compliance with the Notice requirements of the Act;
- the subjects considered at the meeting;
- a brief description of any actions taken; and
- the vote of each member on any items voted upon.

Actions taken by the board of trustees at meetings not held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act can be set aside by a legal action. Law enforcement officials may bring an action seeking to impose fines against any person who knowingly violates the act. The fine for the first offense is $100 and $500 for the second offense. If a trustee, believing that a meeting is in violation of the act, places in the record a statement of his/her reasons for this belief, the trustee may continue to participate in the meeting without fear of being fined under the act.

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Financial Disclosure Statement

The New Jersey Local Government Ethics Law requires officers of county colleges to annually file a financial disclosure statement with the Local Finance Board (LFB) of the Division of Local Government Services within the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. The LFB provides the form of the Financial Disclosure Statement that must be filed by April 30th of each year.

An "officer" of the county college means any person, whether compensated or not, whether part-time or full-time, serving on the governing body (the board of trustees), or who is a managerial executive or confidential employee of the college.

The Financial Disclosure Statement includes (for the preceding calendar year):

- Each source of income exceeding $2,000 received by the officer or a member of his immediate family. Disclosure of the amount of income is not required.
- Each source of fees and honorariums having an aggregate amount exceeding $250 received from any single source by the officer or his immediate family,
- Each source of gifts, reimbursements, or prepaid expenses having an aggregate value in excess of $400 received from any single source, excluding relatives.
- The name and address of all business organizations in which the officer or a member of the immediate family had an interest.
- The address and brief description of all real property in New Jersey in which the officer or a member of the immediate family held an interest.

"Member of the immediate family" means a spouse or dependent child of the officer residing in the same household.

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Collective Bargaining

New Jersey has collective bargaining laws for public employees, including those working at public community colleges.

All community colleges are now involved in some form of collective bargaining. No matter what the state of collective bargaining in your county, this is an important subject with which you should become familiar.

Collective bargaining is important because it governs your relationship with your employees, affects the resources available for running the college, and has many legal ramifications with which a newly appointed trustee may not be familiar. You should spend time with your administrators and attorney reviewing collective bargaining issues and your college's practices in this area.

Most seasoned trustees will agree that collective bargaining is one of the most sensitive (and challenging) issues that trustees and presidents must deal with in New Jersey. Especially during contract negotiations, it is critical for the board to function as a team and to fully support the administration in the negotiations with employee organizations.

Governmental Relations

Because state and county governments affect much of what community college trustees do, and because the state and counties provide funding expended by community college boards, it is necessary that each college maintain solid working relationships with its state legislators and county government officials.

At the state level, the New Jersey Council of County Colleges serves community colleges by representing their general legislative and budgetary interests in Trenton. The Council supplies information and testimony to legislators and their staffs, monitors legislative activity, provides updates to trustees and presidents, and generally coordinates all government relations activities for New Jersey's 19 community colleges at the state level.

At the local level, it is essential that trustees and presidents know their legislators and freeholders, and constantly keep them abreast of developments at the college.

Some trustees might ask why trustees? Why should trustees be involved in these activities with legislators and freeholders? Isn't this the responsibility of presidents and senior staff members? The answer is yes, presidents and staff members must of course be active in state and county politics. But there is nothing quite as effective as trustee participation in government affairs.

Presidents, to some extent, will always be seen as "hired guns" – they are paid to advocate for their colleges. When trustees, on the other hand, give freely of their time and energy to advocate for their colleges, the impact can be very powerful.

The good news for community college trustees is that our colleges have more political potential than any other colleges. "All politics is local" is a phrase frequently heard in Trenton. Applied to higher education, this means that legislators (and obviously freeholders) will always be concerned first and foremost with their local college. This is a tremendous advantage for community colleges, since there are more community colleges in more legislative districts than any other sector of higher education.

How do community colleges convert this political potential into real political influence? Here are a few suggestions for trustees to keep in mind when communicating with legislators (and freeholders) within their local communities:

- **KEEP LEGISLATORS INFORMED** – Trustees should keep in touch with legislators even when community college priorities are not being considered. Legislators are bombarded with hundreds of requests during each legislative session. They will look more favorably on those requests that come from individuals who have taken the time to get to know them on an ongoing basis.

- **INVITE LEGISLATORS TO CAMPUS** – The academic calendar presents countless opportunities to get legislators involved in campus activities. Commencement is the obvious example, but there are many others such as inviting legislators to groundbreaking ceremonies and awards ceremonies, and encouraging legislators to serve as guest lecturers.

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- **BE BRIEF** – Legislators have hundreds of issues on their desks, and will always appreciate your recognition of that fact. Thus, you will always help your cause by being brief and direct.

- **FOLLOW-UP & THANK-YOUS** – Make sure to follow-up in writing or with a phone call to re-acquaint legislators with your issue. Also thank the legislator for his/her time and attention especially if he/she has been helpful.

Trustee Ambassadors

The New Jersey Council of County Colleges recently established a statewide Trustee Ambassador Program to identify and assist trustees who are especially interested in participating in state-level community college activities. Trustee Ambassador activities typically include:

- An annual Trustee Ambassador Day in Trenton
- Meetings with state legislators
- Meetings with members of the NJ Congressional Delegation
- Providing regular "Trustee Ambassador Reports" at local board meetings

If you are interested in serving as a Trustee Ambassador for your college, please call your college president or the Council.

Doing Your Homework

Good board members stay informed about their college. You will be expected to participate in some events and will also be invited to many others. Each college has community luncheons, lecture programs, athletic contests, political events, and dramatic presentations at which the attendance of board members is encouraged. At certain special events, such as commencement or nurse-capping ceremonies, trustees are often expected to be present.

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When you attend campus events, you may be approached with suggestions for the board or criticisms of the college. Experienced trustees advise that a board member should listen carefully and report such conversations to the president. Trustees should be careful not to commit themselves or their boards to any specific course of action.

In addition to attending campus events, trustees have the responsibility to keep informed about proposals and recommendations that the administration presents. You will probably receive a packet of materials regularly, prior to each board meeting. The well-informed trustee reads this material well before the meeting.

Should questions arise, the best procedure is to contact your president before the board meeting to make him/her aware of your questions. If the president is not able to answer your questions at that time, at least he/she will have been alerted so that the correct research and information can be provided at the board meeting.

A good relationship between presidents and trustees eliminates surprises. Good administrators do not bring "walk-in" items to board meetings. Similarly, good trustees make presidents aware of concerns and questions early enough so that answers can be thoroughly prepared.

You should expect to do a certain amount of reading about the field of education to improve your understanding of the many different policy matters that will be discussed during your time on the board. One of the best sources of current news in the field of higher education is a weekly newspaper called the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. It contains in-depth news and analyses of higher education issues as well as a large section devoted to listings of current job openings in the field.

Two other newspapers of special interest to community colleges are the bi-weekly *Community College Times*, published by the American Association of Community Colleges, and the independent *Community College Week*. Both focus solely on community college issues and feature opinion columns, legislative updates, and job listings.

If your college does not provide you with copies of these publications, or similar ones, you should let your president know if you are interested in receiving them.

Associations

Several non-profit associations are of interest to community college trustees. You will probably find that your school belongs to some or all of the following groups:

NEW JERSEY COUNCIL OF COUNTY COLLEGES: The Council is New Jersey's community college advocate in Trenton. In addition, it sponsors continuing education activities for trustees. The Council also serves as an information source, providing a trustee newsletter, membership and legislative directories, legislative analyses and alerts, and other material designed to keep trustees well informed. Each board of trustees is represented at Council meetings by the Chairperson (or a designated alternate) and the president.

At the national level, two groups are particularly worthy of community college membership. Each association plays an important role in higher education. Membership in these associations is very beneficial to your local board. You will find that communication with other trustees from around the nation increases your understanding of your role and your effectiveness on the board.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES (ACCT): This group performs many of the same functions at the national level that the New Jersey Council of County Colleges performs at the state level. ACCT regularly publishes a newsletter called the ACCT Advisor, produces a quarterly magazine that features papers on trusteeship written by trustees, and hosts regional and national meetings that offer educational seminars.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES (AACC): This is a national umbrella organization in which trustees, presidents, and other interested persons join together to promote the community college movement. More than 50 years old, AACC publishes a bi-weekly newspaper and a monthly magazine devoted solely to community colleges. The group also sponsors regional and national meetings that include trustee-oriented workshops.

Asking Questions

This Trustee Manual was designed to answer some basic questions about effective trusteeship. But it only touches the surface. It will take time for you to develop the background and understanding needed for complete familiarity with the community college movement and the many issues facing New Jersey's community colleges in the new millennium.

One of the best ways for you to learn is to ask questions. If you don't understand the budget or a proposed policy or program, ask questions. You are the final decision-making authority on your college campus, and you will bear the responsibility for the decisions that are made. Make sure you understand what you are doing and why it is being done.

Your president will welcome the opportunity to help you keep informed. In addition, your peers at the New Jersey Council of County Colleges stand ready to provide help and guidance. Informative seminars are available, using the expertise of community college leaders from around the state and nation. Regular meetings of the Council are open for you to attend.

Feel free to call the Council at any time for more information at 609-392-3434. Fax us at 609-392-8158 and send email to njccc@aol.com. Also, visit our Web site: www.njccc.org.

We look forward to hearing from you.

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Glossary and Acronyms

AACC **American Association of Community Colleges**

AACC is the national community college presidents organization in Washington, D.C., providing information through a bi-weekly newspaper and annual convention. A liaison to the federal government, AACC serves as an umbrella organization for all community college interests.

ACCT **Association of Community College Trustees**

The national community college trustee organization in Washington, D.C., ACCT provides information (a quarterly journal and periodic conventions) primarily oriented toward trustees.

ACE **American Council of Education**

A voluntary national organization in Washington, D.C., ACE acts as the umbrella organization that coordinates legislative programs and lobbying for all segments of higher education, including community colleges, universities, and private colleges.

Adjuncts

Part-time faculty members.

AFT **American Federation of Teachers**

AFT is a union affiliated with the AFT/AFL-CIO. Its New Jersey branch is the Council of New Jersey State College Locals.

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Articulation

Transfer by a student from one educational institution to another. Articulation agreements between educational institutions make it easier for students, in certain programs who are in good academic standing, to transfer to the next institution without losing credits. Articulation agreements exist between community colleges and four-year colleges, and between vocational-technical schools and community colleges.

Currently, community colleges are working with New Jersey's public four-year colleges and universities to implement ARTSYS, the computer-operated articulation system that will ease the transfer process for community college students continuing their education at state schools.

Board of School Estimate

Consists of the chairman of the board of freeholders, two other freeholders, and two members of the board of trustees. Each year the Board of School Estimate approves the operating and capital budgets for its local community college.

Chapter 12

The capital funding program for New Jersey's community colleges through which the counties issue bonds and the state then pays 50 percent of the debt service. As bonds are retired, additional bonds in the same amount may be issued. These funds have been used for new construction and renovation projects. The counties may opt to have the New Jersey Education Facilities Authority issue the bonds.

CHE New Jersey Commission on Higher Education

Consists of 12 public members and serves as the statewide coordinating agency for Higher Education in New Jersey.

The Commission's primary responsibilities include: systemwide planning, research, and advocacy; final decisions on institutional licensure and mission changes; policy recommendations for higher education initiatives and an annual systemwide budget policy statement; and, upon referral from the New Jersey Presidents' Council, decisions on new academic programs that exceed an institution's mission or are unduly costly or duplicative.

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Continuing Education

Non-credit career courses usually designed for part-time students who want to upgrade their occupational skills and/or pass licensure exams. For careers regulated by the state and requiring continuing education, continuing education departments offer non-degree "continuing education units."

ELF Equipment Leasing Fund

The New Jersey Equipment Leasing Fund for higher education. It was passed in 1993 as a $100 million program including $22 million for state-of-the-art instructional or equipment at community colleges. This program was renewed in 2000 with the community college share increasing to $23.8 million.

EOF Educational Opportunity Fund

New Jersey's financial aid program for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

FTE Full-Time Equivalent

Since community colleges enroll large numbers of part-time students, their enrollment data is adjusted to make it comparable to other segments of higher education. An FTE student is not a real student, but a figure used to denote a number of credit hours a full-time student would take. For instance, five students might attend a community college, each taking one three-credit course. Because together they generate 15 semester hours, these five students would be equal to one full-time student (one FTE) for that semester.

GED **General Education Development**

The GED exam is taken by some students to acquire the legal equivalent of a high school diploma. Many community colleges give classroom and individual instruction to help in preparation for the test.

GPA **Grade Point Average**

The measure of a student's academic standing. Usually, an A = 4 points, a B = 3 points, and so on. The GPA is calculated by multiplying the number of credits in every course by the points earned for those credits, adding them all together, and then dividing by the total number of credits taken in all courses.

JPC **New Jersey County College Joint Purchasing Consortium**

The Joint Purchasing Consortium, formed in August 1999, consists of 16 of New Jersey's 19 community colleges, combining the member colleges' buying power to negotiate better prices on products and services.

NJPC **New Jersey Presidents' Council**

The New Jersey Presidents' Council consists of the presidents of the state's public and independent institutions of higher education that receive state aid.

The Presidents' Council's responsibilities include: reviewing and commenting on new academic programs; providing research and public information on higher education; advising the Commission on planning, institutional licensure, and mission as well as costly or duplicative new academic programs; making recommendations on statewide higher education issues, state aid, and student assistance; and encouraging regional and cooperative programs and transfer articulation agreements.

NJVCCC **New Jersey Virtual Community College Consortium**
www.njvccc.cc.nj.us

In Fall 1999, New Jersey's 19 community colleges formed the New Jersey Virtual Community College Consortium. The NJVCCC offers nearly 300 online courses. Students enroll at their local community college for courses being provided by other community colleges throughout the state.

NJVU **New Jersey Virtual University**
www.njvu.org

Launched in January 1999, NJVU provides an index to over 1000 distance learning courses and programs offered by New Jersey colleges and universities.

OMB **Office of Management and Budget**

An agency within the New Jersey Department of Treasury, it oversees preparation of the state budget and has final approval over the community college funding formula each year.

SETC **State Employment and Training Commission**

Mandated by federal legislation, the SETC is the state body that coordinates all workforce preparation programs in New Jersey. Membership includes representatives from the business, service and education communities.

TAG **Tuition Aid Grants**

New Jersey's largest student aid program provides financial support based on a formula that considers both the cost of the tuition and the student's income. Part-time students are currently not eligible for TAG.

Technology Fund

The Higher Education Technology Infrastructure Fund. It was passed in 1997 as a $100 million program, including $26.4 million for technology infrastructure projects at community colleges.

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Tech Prep or 2 + 2

A sequence of study beginning in high school and continuing through at least two years of postsecondary occupational education. Tech Prep parallels the college prep course of study and prepares students for high-skill technical occupations.

Transfer Program

A credit program that provides the first two years of a four-year degree, such as Engineering or Liberal Arts.

WDP **Workforce Development Partnership**

New Jersey's Workforce Development Partnership program was signed into law in 1992. This NJ Department of Labor $50 million per-year program provides funds for: (1) employers to train or re-train current workers to make their companies more competitive; and (2) displaced workers, to upgrade skills or learn new occupations. Community colleges serve WDP client employers through customized training as well as by enrolling individual displaced workers in both credit and non-credit programs.

WIBs **Workforce Investment Boards**

New Jersey's WIBs were created by executive order of the Governor to comply with several federal block grants programs, including job training programs for dislocated workers, one-stop career centers, welfare reform, and School to Work. The chairperson of each WIB and 51 percent of the membership must be from the private sector. The community college president, the superintendent of the vocational-technical high school, and other government and service sector representatives are also WIB members.

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